PRE-ANAESTHETIC PATIENT QUESTIONNAIRE

P A CHARLEBOIS, B A , B SC , M D *

THE PROBLEM which the anaesthetist faces in procuring an adequate and relevant medical history from the considerable number of patients who are admitted to hospital late in the day for operation on the following morning may in large part be resolved by the use of a well-planned questionnaire which is completed by the patient himself on admission. Such a questionnaire has been in use for over two years at the Scarborough General Hospital, and is presented here in its final and definitive form. The questionnaire is presented to the patient or parent by the nurse along with the form giving consent for operation. If the patient or parent has any difficulties in understanding the questions he is assisted by the nurse, but this is a rare occurrence. The time required by the patient to complete the questionnaire can be measured in seconds, as the vocabulary used is basic and the design is such that the questions are answered by putting a mark in one of three columns in line with the question concerned. Each column represents one of three possible answers. The heading of the first column is "YES," of the second "NO," and of the third "DON'T KNOW." Reference to the completed questionnaire makes it possible for the anaesthetist to make further enquiry in relevant areas.

This questionnaire has been of great assistance in the pre-operative evaluation and premedication of patients. It is placed on the patient's chart when he enters the operating room and is referred to by both the anaesthetist and the surgeon. The questionnaire was evolved after testing on many thousands of patients and has many advantages. The fact that the patient or parent personally signs the form identifies it definitely and should be of medicolegal significance if necessary. By using a standard form, we can derive statistical data which permit us to compare patient populations from year to year and from hospital to hospital.

Each question in this form has been carefully revised, and while there is a redundancy of words and questions, these are found to be necessary. As physicians we often forget that we have our own vocabulary, whose words have an entirely different meaning for the general population. To many of our patients pills are quite different from medicine, and insulin is not considered a medication because it has been taken for years.

Among the items of information derived from this questionnaire are some which might not be immediately obvious. The patient makes a record of his weight and age. This has been found to be of great value in ordering pre-operative medication. The patient records the time at which he last had something to eat and the time at which he last had something to drink. This information is of particular value for patients who enter the hospital for a minor procedure to be

*Department of Anaesthesia, Scarborough General Hospital, Scarborough, Ont., and Scarborough Medical Research Foundation

PATIENT QUESTIONNAIRE

SCARBOROUGH GENERAL HOSPITAL - Department of Anaesthesia

The following set of questions have been designed for use by the Department of Anaesthesia. They are to be completed on the day before your operation. Please answer each question carefully and return the completed sheet to the nurse as soon as possible.

ANSWER (✓)	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
1 Did you ever take any medicine or pills for your heart?	3.2%		
2 Did you ever take any medicine or pills for your blood pressure?	8.6%		
3 Did you ever take any medicine or pills for your breathing?	5.8%		
4 Do you have any loose teeth?	4.6%		
5 Do you have any false teeth?	37.8%		
6 Did you ever have any trouble with your heart?	6.5%		
7 Did you ever have high or low blood pressure?	14.2%		
8 Did you ever have any trouble with your breathing?	13.4%		
9 Did a doctor ever tell you you had asthma?	4.5%		
10 Do you take any medicine or pills of any type regularly while you are not in the hospital?	23.1%		
11 To the best of your knowledge are you allergic to anything?	19.3%		
12 If so, what are you allergic to?			
13 Within the last year, have you taken any medicine for Rheumatism Arthritis or Allergies?	7.4%		
14 Have you taken a drug called Cortisone or Acth within the last year?	3.4%		
15 Please list below the operations you have had during your life			
16 Please list below the illnesses you have had during your life			
17 Please list below the names of the medicines you have taken regularly and the reasons for taking them			
18 Have you taken any tranquilizers or nerve pills within the last two weeks?	10.1%		
19 Have you ever had a blood transfusion?	15.2%		
20 Have you ever had a reaction to a local or general anaesthetic?			
21 At what time did you last have something to eat?			
22 At what time did you last have something to drink?			

Name _____ Age _____ Date _____ Approx Weight _____

FIGURE 1 Patient questionnaire for preoperative history. The figures superimposed in the "YES" column represent the positive answers in percentages for 1000 consecutive patients coming for operation at the Scarborough General Hospital.

done on the same day. It is also of great value for patients coming to the operating room from the emergency department.

Interesting statistical information has been derived from a survey of these questionnaires. A pilot study of 100 questionnaires proved to be of interest, and this has been followed by a similar survey of an additional 1000 consecutive patients. In this way the age distribution of 1100 suburban surgical patients has been tabulated (Table I). The questionnaire itself is shown in Figure 1, filled in to give the percentage of positive answers to the various relevant questions based on a survey of 1000 consecutive patients.

TABLE I
AGE DISTRIBUTION OF 1100 SUBURBAN SURGICAL PATIENTS

Age (years)	100 patients (pilot)	1000 patients (survey)		
	Total (%)	Total (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)
0-10	13	14.6	8.9	5.7
11-20	5	8.3	3.4	4.8
21-30	15	17.1	4.3	12.8
31-40	27	22.6	6.0	17.6
41-50	23	19.0	5.3	13.7
51-60	11	9.9	4.5	5.4
61-70	6	5.1	2.6	2.5
71-80	0	3.3	1.1	1.2
81-90	0	0.2	0.0	0.2
Total	Male 39% Female 61%	100.1	36.1	63.9

SUMMARY

A simple basic patient questionnaire is presented, on which the preoperative patient may record a number of factors relating to his medical history which are of importance to the anaesthetist. It has been found to be of value to the Department of Anaesthesia in making preoperative rounds, and to the nurses and attending surgeons. It quickly presents positive information about the individual patient, and may be used for statistical purposes.

RÉSUMÉ

Nous avons présenté un questionnaire de base, d'après lequel le candidat à l'opération peut déclarer des faits relatifs à son histoire médicale et importants pour l'anesthésiste. Il a été utile aux anesthésistes, lors de la visite pré-opératoire, aux infirmières et aux chirurgiens. Il renseigne rapidement au sujet du malade, et on peut utiliser ces renseignements pour fins de statistiques.